Nomen and full heading:

**Astra’s Diary**

Whew! That was a close one. I’d heard the story of the Horatii brothers’ bravery and glorious victory when I was very young, but I never imagined that I would play a part in separating the Curiatii brothers so that they could be defeated one by one. I was surprised that my friend Tempus didn’t remember the story or even the shocking details of what happened after the epic battle.

Back in the early days of Rome, Alba Longa was such a close neighboring city – it was the origins of Romulus and Remus afterall – that the Romans and Albans often had relatives on either side or could be married to one another. So it was that the sister of the Horatii triplets had been engaged to marry one of the Curiatii brothers. When the surviving brother – Publius Horatius – was returning triumphantly to the city of Rome, carrying the cloaks of his vanquished enemies, his sister saw the cloak of her beloved fiancé and cried out in mourning. Publius was enraged, drew his sword immediately, and killed his sister in broad daylight, exclaiming, “So perish every Roman woman who mourns for an enemy!”

The people of Rome were upset and even though Publius had saved all of Rome, they did not approve sororicide. He was put on trial and sentenced to death. It’s ironic, isn’t it? He saved Rome with his patriotism and valor in battle, but this same patriotism led him to commit such a terrible crime.

The story doesn’t end there though – before his execution, Publius appealed to the Roman people. The laws and rules of Rome were still pretty new at the time, so this case created a new precedent that convicted criminals could appeal to the Roman people for a trial by jury. At the new trial, the father of the Horatii begged for mercy. He explained how he had lost two of his sons in their sacrifice for Rome and now had lost a daughter too. Publius was his last living child. He also explained that as the *paterfamilias* he had had the right to execute his son for the murder, but had chosen forgiveness instead. He implored the Roman people to do the same. After all, Publius had been brave and noble in fighting to save Rome.

It was a complicated situation and the Roman people had a tough decision to make. They pardoned him because he had been a hero to the Roman people, though they did not believe he had treated his sister justly.

I find this part of the story rather troubling – what do you do when your hero does something wrong? Can his good deeds outweigh the bad ones and exempt him from consequences? Socrates didn’t believe that anyone could be exempt from the laws, so what’s the point of having laws if we allow loopholes? Should mercy be valued more than justice?

I don’t know that I can figure out the answers to all these questions, but I think they are worth thinking about. What do you think? Should Publius Horatius have been pardoned?

**Reading Comprehension Questions** Answer the following questions about the Horatii.

1. Why was the sister of the Horatii crying? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. How did Publius Horatius react to his crying sister? What did he say?

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1. What was the decision of his first trial? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. The father Horatii argued three reasons why his son should be pardoned. Summarize two of them.

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1. Do you think Publius Horatius should have been pardoned or punished for his crime? Why or why not?

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